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ABSTRACT

Information on Florida public education student acceleration programs is contained in this 1974 report to the legislature, compiled by the Florida State Department of Education. There are six means used in Florida schools to fulfill the legislative mandate to provide time-shortened educational programs at all levels of the educational system: (1) credit by examination and equivalency tests for credit at state community colleges and universities, (2) advanced placement programs, (3) year-round matriculation encouraging a variety of entry periods for students into programs of instruction, (4) dual enrollment allowing high school students to be enrolled concurrently in high school, a college, or area vocational school, (5) early admission to colleges and universities, and (6) job entry studies providing for on-the-job training prior to graduation from high school. The department of education recommends that present funding formulas for acceleration be reviewed. (Author/DS)

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STUDENT ACCELERATION IN FLORIDA PUBLIC EDUCATION

A REPORT TO THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

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State of Florida
Department of Education
Floyd T. Christian, Commissioner
March 1, 1974

EA 010 185

I. BACKGROUND

This report is submitted pursuant to the requirements of Chapter 73-195, Laws of Florida. Section 3 of that Chapter calls for an annual report to the Legislature on programs for student acceleration in Florida public education.

Prior to the regular 1972 Legislative Session, the Commissioner appointed a Task Force to explore the feasibility of a baccalaureate degree program which can be completed in three academic years. The developmental work later requested by the Legislature was carried out by that Task Force.

The Florida Legislature expressed its strong support for student acceleration when it enacted Chapter 72-313, Laws of Florida (Section 229.8021, Florida Statutes). This law requires the Commissioner of Education to devise methods under which qualified students could complete a baccalaureate degree in not more than nine quarters.

On March 1, 1973, the Commissioner transmitted his recommendations on student acceleration, along with the Task Force report, to both the Legislature and the State Board of Education. In his letter of transmittal, the Commissioner endorsed the nine recommendations made by the Task Force. With his endorsement, he affirmed his intent to implement alternatives for helping qualified students accelerate their academic progress.

In the 1973 regular Session, the Legislature enacted Chapter 73-195, declaring its intent to encourage programs in which students can proceed toward their educational objectives as rapidly as their circumstances permit. The statute endorses time-shortened educational programs at all levels in the system.

Following the enactment of Chapter 73-195, the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education adopted regulations to carry out its intent. These regulations call for:

1. Provisions for qualified students to complete a minimum of twenty-five per cent (25%) of baccalaureate degree requirements through acceleration mechanisms.

2. Early admission programs for qualified public school students.

3. An annual report to the Commissioner of Education from each university, community college, and school district (due September 1) on the availability of acceleration mechanisms and the extent of their use.

4. Publicizing of acceleration opportunities in college catalogs and other appropriate publications.

The State Board of Education also created a standing committee on time-shortened educational programs. The Committee is composed of Department of Education personnel and representatives of public universities, community colleges, and public schools. Members of the Committee are listed in Appendix A. The Committee is responsible for evaluating reports from districts and institutions relating to time-shortened educational programs, compiling statistics and information on acceleration mechanisms available in Florida public education, and making recommendations to the Commissioner to foster time-shortened educational programs at all levels.

II. THE USE OF STUDENT ACCELERATION MECHANISMS

During the current year, school districts and institutions are establishing regular procedures for collecting and reporting data on acceleration mechanisms. Complete information on the use of these mechanisms in 1973-74 will be available in September.

The information reported below was compiled using existing records wherever possible, thus reducing the response burden on school districts and instiutions. In some cases, however, special surveys were necessary.

Credit by Examination

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP), a national system for awarding credit by examination, is widely used in Florida. This program was established in 1965 by the College Entrance Examination Board, a non-profit membership organization that provides tests and other educational services for students, schools, and colleges. CLEP was developed to serve students who acquire knowledge through means outside of regular baccalaureate degree programs (e.g., correspondence and university extension courses, educational television, adult education programs, on-the-job training, independent study). It is based on the premise that what one knows is more important than how one came to know it.

There are two types of CLEP examinations: (1) the general examination, designed to provide a comprehensive measure of undergraduate achievement in five basic areas of liberal arts (English composition, mathematics, natural sciences, humanities, and history) and (2) the subject examinations, designed to measure achievement in specified undergraduate courses.

Credits earned on CLEP examinations are accepted at all state universities and all community colleges in Florida. In the State University System, 74,696 credits were awarded on the basis of CLEP examinations in the 1973 calendar year. In the Community College System, 40,002 credits were awarded on the basis of CLEP examinations in the 1972-73 academic year. Most of these credits were in the basic studies areas and were earned through the CLEP general examinations. The above figures represent approximately 2.3% of the undergraduate credits earned in the State University System and 1.7% of the credits in the Community College System in 1972-73.

Credit by examination can also be earned by using examinations developed by individual institutions. Three community colleges report the use of such examinations; in 1972-73, 225 credits were awarded on this basis. Three state universities also report the use of Departmental examinations for earning credits. The University of Florida has instituted an experimental program allowing up to 36 credits to students who receive exceptionally high scores on the Florida twelfth grade tests.

Advanced Placement Program

The Advanced Placement Program, which began in 1955, offers high school students an opportunity to complete more demanding and challenging work than is usually found at the high school level. It permits students to study one or more college-level courses while they are still in secondary school and to receive advanced placement, credit, or both upon entering college.

The Advanced Placement Program is administered by the College Entrance Examination Board with the help of Educational Testing Service (ETS). It provides secondary schools with advanced placement course descriptions in 13 disciplines. Course descriptions and examinations are prepared by committees of school and college teachers, with the assistance of ETS tests specialists.

All five of the state universities offering lower division work allow credit under the Advanced Placement Program. Seven-hundred-forty-three credits were awarded in this manner in the 1973 calendar year.

Credits for participation in the Advanced Placement Program are also allowed by 24 of the 28 community colleges. One-thousand credits were earned in this manner in 1972-73.

Year-round Matriculation

Year-round matriculation is a means of accommodating the educational calendar to the needs of the student. Traditionally, students have been required to enroll at the beginning of an academic year. In recent years, new students have also been encouraged to enroll at other times during the year.

In the Fall of 1973, a large number of courses in Florida Community Colleges began at times other than the opening of the regular term. Almost 200,000 credits were awarded through such courses. This represents 12% of the total credits earned this Fall in the Community College System.

The practice of year-round matriculation is most extensive in post-secondary adult and vocational education. Over half of the 200,000 community college credits cited above were earned in occupational courses. The records of area vocational schools operated by district school boards also show extensive use of year-round matriculation. During 1972-73, new courses were begun during every month of the year. For vocational and technical classes, the heaviest months are August, September, and January with 6,000-9,000 courses starting each month. However, there are four additional months with over 1,000 courses starting--July, April, May, and June. The number of courses starting in the remaining months ranges from a low of 124 in December to a high of 691 in March.

The Commissioner's Task Force on Educational Calendars recently reviewed the calendars of all public post-secondary institutions in Florida. This Task Force recommended that there be at least

three common entry periods for students in post-secondary institutions; also, all institutions should be encouraged to provide additional periods throughout the year in which students can begin programs of instruction. Regulations to implement the Task Force recommendations are now being drafted for consideration by the State Board of Education.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment allows high school students to be enrolled concurrently in high school and a college, university or area vocational school. It also allows community college students to be enrolled concurrently in a community college and a university.

Dual enrollment and/or early admission (see below) have been implemented for high school students in most of the school districts of Florida. These alternatives have been available to students on an optional basis since 1963. During 1972-73, 2,144 high school students were also enrolled in community colleges. In a comparable period of time (the 1973 calendar year), 142 high school students were also enrolled in state universities. The total (2,286) represents one out of every sixteen 1973 high school graduates who entered college in the Fall of 1973.

Early Admission

Early admission is simialr to dual enrollment. If differs in that with dual enrollment, a student is considered "a high school student who is also taking post-secondary courses." With early admission, the student is considered "a post-secondary student who left high school before completing the twelfth grade." In either case, credits earned in college may count toward high school graduation.

In 1972-73, 455 students in Florida's public community colleges were given early admission. For the 1973 calendar year, 165 were given early admission to state universities.

Job Entry Studies

The job entry studies graduation plan provides a means of acceleration for students who do not plan to enter a post-secondary institution. This plan was first made available to students on an optional basis in September, 1971. It permits students to enter the job market as full-time employees at the end of their junior year. Under this plan, credits toward high school graduation are awarded for successful on-the-job performance. A member of the school staff serves as liaison between the employer and the school and approves the work for which high school credit is granted.

During 1972-73, 17 school districts provided opportunities for students to graduate under the job entry studies plan. There were 1,301 students participating. This number represents one out of every thirty-two high school graduates who did not enter a post-secondary institution in the Fall of 1973.

III. RECOMMENDATION

The first year of Florida's systematic effort to promote meaninful acceleration is not yet over. Thus, there has been little experience on which to formulate recommendations. However a logical analysis indicates that the manner for funding institutional services associated with student acceleration should be reviewed.

The most apparent problems are those associated with credit by examination. Present funding formulas assume that a portion of the instructional costs will support counseling and administrative services. When credits are awarded by examination, there is no instructional cost. However, there are administrative and counseling costs. At the present time, funding formulas do not provide for the direct generation of support for these services. As larger numbers of credits are earned through examinations, the balance between instruction on one hand and counseling and administrative services on the other is altered. If greater support is required for counseling and administrative services, funds available for instruction will decrease. Thus, the quality of instruction will decline.

The Department of Education, therefore, recommends that present funding formulas be reviewed. This review should identify means for appropriately funding credit by examination and for absorbing other financial impacts associated with acceleration mechanisms. Following further study of this situation, the Department expects to offer definitive recommendations.

APPENDIX A

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